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AN

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE ASSOCIATION

OF

THE ALUMNI OF HARVARD COLLEGE,

BY

ROBERT C. WINTHROP.

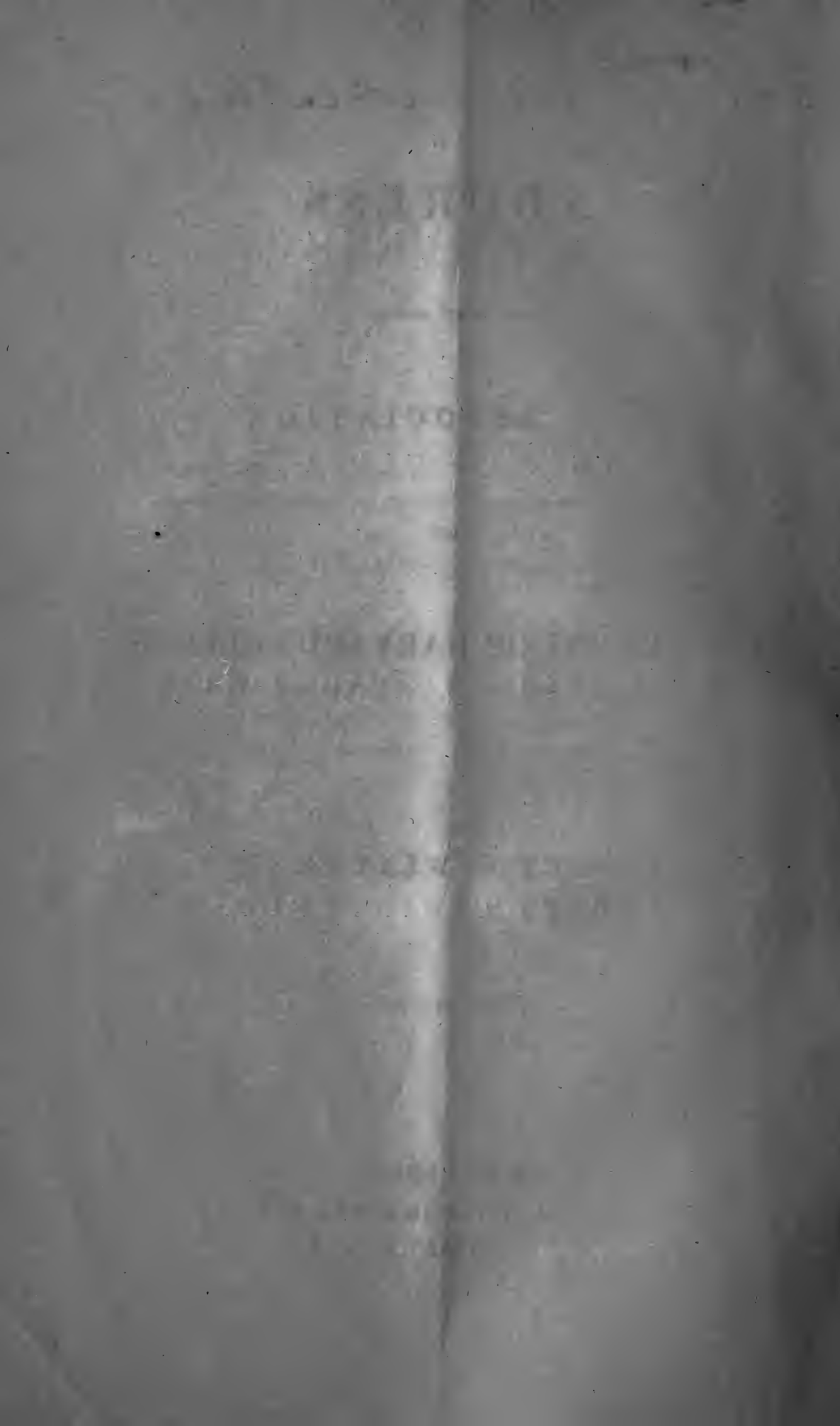
JULY 22, 1852.

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HARVARD, "most reverend head, to whom I owe
All that I am in arts, all that I know; —
(How nothing's that!) — to whom my country owes
The great renown and name wherewith she goes: —
Many of thine this better could, than I,
But for their powers, accept my piety."

At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the *Association of the Alumni
of Harvard College*, held at Cambridge, 22d July, 1852,

Resolved, that the thanks of the Association be presented to the Hon.
ROBERT C. WINTHROP, for his truly eloquent and appropriate Address,
delivered this day, at the request of the Association, and that he be requested
to furnish a copy of the same for the press.

True copy from the record. Attest,

NATHANIEL B. SHURTLEFF, *Secretary*.

ADDRESS.

IN rising, Mr. President and Brethren, to perform the distinguished part in the services of this morning, which has been assigned me by your Executive Committee, it is a real relief to me to reflect, how little, after all, the success of this occasion will depend, on the character of the entertainment which may be afforded you, during the brief hour which I may be at liberty to occupy, by any thing of formal or ceremonious discourse.

It is not by words of wisdom or of dulness, it is not by arguments forcible or feeble, it is not by appeals animated or vapid, it is not by pathos or by bathos, that an occasion like this is to be made or marred.

The occasion itself is its own best and surest success. Certainly, it is its own best and most effective Orator. The presence of this vast concourse of the Sons of Harvard, drawn together by a common interest in the prosperity and welfare of their Alma Mater, and bound to each other by a common desire and a common determination to uphold and advance her ancient character and renown, is enough to make this occasion forever memorable in her annals, and to secure for it a better, a more brilliant, and a far more enduring

success, than any which could result from the most glowing display of individual eloquence.

And, indeed, what could any one attempt at such a moment but to give expression, — a faint and imperfect expression at the best, — to the sentiments and emotions which have already been awakened in all our hearts by the scene and the circumstances before us? — emotions and sentiments too deep and serious, I am persuaded, to be satisfied with any mere ambitious rhetoric or jubilant oratory.

We are assembled around the altars at which we were dedicated in our youth to the pursuit and attainment of a sound, liberal, Christian education, and from which we went forth in our early manhood to the duties and responsibilities of our respective professions and callings. We are here after many and various experiences of success and of failure, of joy and of sadness, of wealth and of want, in our subsequent career. We come, some of us, after but a brief trial of the stern realities of life, with the world all before us, and our relations to it still to be determined; — some of us in the middle stage of our earthly course, in the full enjoyment of whatever faculties we possess, and of whatever position we have acquired; — and some of us bending beneath the weight of years and of cares, with little more to hope or to fear for ourselves on this side the grave. How many thoughts are stirred within us all, as we look back, over a longer or a shorter interval, to the days when we first approached these Classic Halls! How many reflections crowd in upon each one of us, as to what we might have done, and what we did, *then*, — as to what

we might have been, and what we are, *now*! How many blighted hopes and disappointed expectations of others or of ourselves are revived in our remembrance! How many familiar forms of cherished friends, of beloved companions, of revered preceptors, long since parted from us, start up at our side, and seem almost to wait for our embrace!

“Rapt in celestial transport they,
Yet hither oft a glance from high
They send of tender sympathy
To bless the place, where on their opening soul
First the genuine ardor stole!”

And we, too, Brethren, are here “to bless the place” of our earliest and best opportunities. We come, one and all, to bear our united testimony to the value of this venerated Institution. We come to bring whatever laurels we have acquired, whatever treasures we have accumulated, to adorn its hallowed shrines. We come to pay fresh homage to the memory of our Fathers for having founded and reared it. We come to renew our tribute of gratitude to its earlier and its later Benefactors. We come to thank God for having prospered and blessed it. And we come, above all, to acknowledge our own personal indebtedness to it, and to make public recognition of the manifold obligations and responsibilities, to God and to man, which rest upon us all, by reason of the opportunities and advantages which we have here enjoyed.

We are here, I need not say, in no spirit of vain-glorious boastfulness or empty self-congratulation. We are here to arrogate nothing to ourselves in the way of distinction or privilege. We are here to set up no claim to peculiar consideration or honor on account

of the titular dignities or parchment prerogatives which have been conferred upon us from yonder antique chair. We are not blind to the fact, that there are those around us, who have enjoyed none of our Academic opportunities, and who have yet outstripped not a few of us in the practical pursuits of literature and of life. We do not forget that there are some of them, who have surpassed us all in the highest walks of Art, of Science, and of Patriotic Statesmanship. Honor, honor this day from this assembled multitude of Scholars, to the self-made, self-educated, men, who have adorned and are still adorning our country's history. Honor to the common schools of our land, from which such men have derived all which they have not owed to their own industry, their own energy, their own God-given genius. Bowditch, Fulton, Franklin, Washington, — to name no others among the dead or among the living, — when will any American University be able to point to names upon its catalogue of Alumni which may be likened to these names, for the originality and profoundness of the researches, for the practical importance of the accomplishments, for the grandeur and sublimity of the inventions and discoveries, or for the noble achievements and glorious institutions, with which they are indissolubly associated! Well may we say, as we proudly inscribe their names upon our honorary rolls, — “they were wanting to our glory; we were not wanting to theirs.”

Nor are we here, Mr. President and Brethren, to indulge in any invidious comparisons between our own University and other Universities and Colleges in the State or in the Nation. It is pardonable, to say the

least, to love one's own mother better than other people's mothers. It is natural that we should

"Be to her faults a little blind,
Be to her virtues very kind."

Indeed, as we run our eyes over the long list of her children, and see what a goodly fellowship of Prophets, what a glorious company of Apostles, she has sent forth into every field of Christian service;—as we turn back to that first Commencement, on the 5th day of October in the year 1642, when "nine bachelors commenced at Cambridge, young men of good hope and performed their acts, so as gave good proof of their proficiency in the tongues and arts,"*—and thence follow her along her starry way for more than two centuries,—we might be almost pardoned for forgetting that she has, or ever had, any faults. And could we but see something of a higher moral discipline, something of a deeper religious sentiment, something of a stronger spiritual influence, mingling with the sound scholarship which pervades her Halls, and giving something of a fresher and fuller significance to her ancient motto, "*Christo et Ecclesiæ* ;"—could we but see a little more of that state of things here, which Thomas Arnold contemplated, when he nobly declared at Rugby—"It is not necessary that this should be a school of three hundred or of one hundred or of fifty, but it is necessary that it should be a school of *Christian Gentlemen*,"—there would be little or nothing more to be desired in her condition.

I pretend not to know how this common want of almost all Seminaries of instruction is to be supplied.

* Winthrop's New England, Savage's ed. vol. ii. p. 87.

But, O ! let us be careful that the indulgence of sectarian jealousies do not result in a downright divorce between education and religion. Let us be watchful, lest our disposition to do away all color for the idea of a State Religion, shall terminate in banishing religion from our Republican Schools. Better, a thousand-fold better, that a Seminary like this should be under the steady, effective, aye, or even exclusive influence, of any one religious sect, than that it should be without the influence of some sort of vital Christianity. Let us, if we can, and as far as we can, so blend the rays which are reflected from every different view of the Bible, that they shall form one harmonious beam of Holy Light, streaming in at every door and window and loophole of our Halls and Chapels, and casting golden glories upon every pinnacle and buttress and tower. But let us be cautious, that in attempting to shut out any one particular ray which may be imagined to predominate in our Academic atmosphere, we take no risk of shutting out the glorious sunshine of the Gospel, and of leaving the Institution, in this day of its highest intellectual advantages, in a condition of spiritual darkness, —

“Dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon, —
Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse,
Without all hope of day !”

But whatever degree of affectionate interest and concern we may cherish towards this oldest of our American Colleges, and however proud we may be to hail her this day as our own great parent, we are not assembled in any spirit of hostility or indifference to the success and welfare of others. We do not forget

how many of the most brilliant luminaries of our land, how many even of the bright, particular stars of our own immediate sphere, have drawn their light from other fountains. Amherst and Williams, Columbia and Union, William and Mary, Hampden and Sidney, South Carolina and New Jersey, Maryland, Middlebury, Brown, Yale, Bowdoin, and Dartmouth;—all these, and many more than these, I need not say, have sent forth sons to adorn and bless their native land, and the Alumni of Harvard rejoice this day in the progress and prosperity of them all, and offer to their children the right hand of a cordial, fraternal fellowship.

Nor do we forget, in the good wishes of the occasion, those renowned and reverend Universities of Old England, from one of which our own was named, in one of which the founder of our own, and many more of the early fathers of New England, were educated, and to which Literature, and Science, and Art are indebted for so vast a preponderance of their treasures.

Yes, Brethren, wherever, beneath the sky, young men are gathered together for the purposes of a liberal, classical, Christian education, there are our hearts at this hour in the midst of them. While we would never forget our allegiance to the State and the Nation of which we are citizens, we yet feel, to-day, that we belong to a Republic broader and more comprehensive than either of them;—a Republic whose history runs back through centuries and cycles of centuries past, and looks forward through centuries and cycles of centuries to come,—which embraces all languages

and tongues and kindreds and people, linking together in one great society "the noble living and the noble dead"; — a Republic, in reference to which we know no points of the compass, no degrees of latitude, and for whose advancement, prosperity, and perpetual union, we can never cease to strive; — a Republic, in regard to which we reverse all our wishes in relation to our own political confederacy, and pray God that its limits may be extended, wider and wider, by purchase, by negotiation, by annexation, spoliation, and conquest, until, bounding its dominions by the seas and its fame by the stars, it shall realize the dream of Universal Empire!

And now, Mr. President and Brethren, coming here, as I hope and believe we all have, in this liberal and catholic spirit, and recognizing our relations to this large and comprehensive society, we cannot but feel that there are peculiar obligations and responsibilities resting upon us all as educated men; — and it is to a consideration of some of these responsibilities, and of some of the temptations which interfere with their just discharge, that I propose to devote what remains of this address.

Whatever may be pronounced to be the great end and object of a liberal education, there can be no doubt or difference of opinion as to one of its effects on those who enjoy its advantages. I mean its influence in imparting to them, in a greater or less degree, powers and faculties of the utmost moment to the welfare of their fellow men; — in communicating to them, indeed, proportionately to their ability to grasp and

wield them, the very instruments by which the condition of society, moral, religious, and political, is, and is to be, mainly controlled.

The best result of all the inventions, discoveries, and improvements of modern times has been to give a wider and wider sway to intellectual and moral power. The world is fast ceasing to be governed by any mere material forces. The Metallic Ages, whether of ancient or of modern mythology, have passed away. And we have eminently reached a period of which the great characterizing and governing principle is Opinion — Public Opinion. Pervading the civilized world like that subtle and elastic fluid which philosophers of all ages have supposed to be diffused throughout the physical Universe, — it is yet far more than any mere outside atmosphere, far more than any mere circumambient, lumeniferous ether. It infuses itself into every joint of the social system. It penetrates the mighty mass of human motive and human action. It shapes, colors, directs, controls, and keeps in motion, (under God,) the whole course of public events; realizing, so far as any mortal influence can realize, the spirit of the living creature in the wheels of the Prophet, or the familiar but sublime description of the Roman Poet, —

*“ Spiritus intus alit; totamque infusa per artus,
Mens agitat molem, et magno se corpore miscet.”*

It is itself, however, no mysterious, original, or unchangeable element. On the contrary, it is susceptible of every degree of impression and modification; and its alterations and undulations are not only visible in their result, but are open to observation and analysis in the very progress and process of transition, and they

may be traced back and referred, directly and unmistakably, to the causes which produced them.

Public Opinion, in a word, is nothing less, and nothing more, than the aggregate of individual opinions; the resultant, if I may so speak, of all those various concurring or conflicting opinions which individuals conceive, express, and advocate. And it is from the character of the individual opinions which are, from day to day and from hour to hour, designedly thrown or accidentally dropped, into the ever-flowing current of Public Opinion, as it passes along, I had almost said, before our very doors and beneath our very windows, that it takes its color, form, direction, and force.

Now the main instruments by which individual minds, in proportion to their natural or acquired energy, are brought to bear upon Public Opinion, or upon the public mind from which it emanates, are obviously the instruments which belong peculiarly to educated men. They are the precise instruments which it is one of the principal results of a liberal education to teach and facilitate the use of. I mean, I need not say, *the Tongue, and the Pen*. The word spoken, and the word written,—these are the simple, original elements of which all Public Opinion is composed;—every word spoken, and every word written, entering into the composition, according to its quality and its power,—almost as every rain drop, and every dew drop, and even every misty exhalation, goes to color and swell the mountain stream or the ocean flood.

It is not enough considered, I fear, by educated men, who are often among the most impatient and irritable, when false sentiments and mischievous no-

tions prevail on any subject, that they themselves, in their various avocations and professions, are mainly responsible for their existence. They are responsible, for what they say, and for what they leave unsaid; for what they write, and for what they leave unwritten; for opinions which they take part in establishing, and for opinions which they take no part in overthrowing. It may be difficult for the bookworm, shut up in some dark alcove, and engaged in the preparation of some abstract philosophical or theological treatise, to realize that he has any thing to do with that mighty moral power, of whose edicts legislatures are so often but the formal recorders, and laws but the periodical proclamation, — which construes Constitutions, controls standing armies, supports or overturns thrones, and rules the world. So is it difficult to realize that the ocean-worm has had any thing to do with the Island or the Continent, which has yet risen from the sea through its labors, and which rests on the foundations which it has laid. But it behoves us all to remember, that consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or accidentally, positively or negatively, each one of us, according to our opportunities, our powers, and our employment of them, is engaged at this moment, and at every moment, in the formation and direction of Public Opinion, and that each one of us has an individual responsibility for its course and character.

It is this responsibility, as developed and increased a thousand-fold by the circumstances of the age and of the land in which we live, that I desire to illustrate and enforce. Consider, for a moment, the vast power and purchase, if I may so speak, which modern inven-

tions and modern institutions have given to the spoken and the written word! Public Opinion, as an element of greater or less importance in the affairs of men, is by no means a new thing. There never could have been a moment since the existence of society, when there was not something of common sentiment among those associated in the same State or city or neighborhood, and when it must not have had more or less influence on their character and conduct. In the ancient Republics of Greece and Rome, it was hardly a less potent engine of authority and government, *so far as it extended*, than it is among ourselves at the present day. But how far did it extend? What were the means which the Ancients enjoyed for instructing, controlling, and marshalling it to a purpose, compared with those which we now employ?

Look, for an instant, to the speakers and writers of antiquity, and see how far it was in their power to operate on the public mind of the world as they knew it, or of the age in which they lived. Take the very Prince of ancient orators — of all orators whom the world has known — the Homer of eloquence, — as the modern Germans have well entitled him, — who “wielded at will the fierce democratie” of Athens. Follow him to one of the great scenes of his triumphs. See him ascending the Bema. Behold him, as looking round upon the Parthenon and the Propylæa, he inhales the inspiration of their massive grandeur and matchless symmetry, or, as darting a more distant glance towards the Piræus, he catches the image of his country’s power and prowess reflected from the shining beaks of her slumbering galleys! Listen to

him, as he pronounces one of those masterly and magnificent arguments, which must ever be the models of all true popular eloquence, and of which we may say, in his own words, "time itself seems to be the noblest witness to their glory, — a series of so many years hath now passed away, and still no men have yet appeared who could surpass those patterns of perfection." *

The orator has concluded. The storm of applause has subsided. The vote has been taken — to succor the Olynthians, to resist Philip, or, it may be, to acquit Ctesiphon and banish Æschines. The Assembly is dispersed. But where are now the brilliant and burning words which have kindled them into such a blaze of enthusiasm? Have they been caught up, as they fell flaming from the lip, by a score of Reporters, as with the fidelity of a Daguerreotype? Have they been wafted upon a kindred current to a hundred cities? Have they, indeed, been

"fulminated over Greece,
To Macedon and Artaxerxes' throne?"

Have they been served up in a thousand journals, to a hundred thousand readers, before another sunrise? Have they even been put into a decent pamphlet for more convenient and deliberate perusal and reference?

No wonder that the great Athenian so emphatically pronounced the sum of all eloquence to be *action*. No wonder, that he exercised himself in speaking with pebbles in his mouth, and measured his voice against the roaring surges of the sea. The orators of antiquity spoke only to their immediate audience. They could

* Oration on the Classes.

address themselves to nobody else. It was upon the living multitude before them that an influence was to be produced, or not at all. Their power was limited by the number of persons assembled to hear them, or even more limited by the strength of their own lungs. The 6000 men who were necessary to constitute a *psephisma* or decree, or, at the very most, the 20,000 men who enjoyed the right of suffrage, were all to whom Demosthenes could appeal, — all upon whom his magic words and mighty thoughts could operate. He spoke to Athens ; and

“ Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of arts
And eloquence, native to famous wits
Or hospitable,” —

was a city just about the size of Boston, with a population of only 140,000 in all, men, women, children and slaves ; — and the whole territory of Attica was not more than an eighth part of our own little Massachusetts.*

Fortunately, most fortunately for posterity, Demosthenes had too much distrust of himself, or too much respect for the people of Athens, to venture upon any great effort, without having previously prepared in writing the greater part, if not the whole, of what he was going to say. Fortunately, he was not ashamed to have it said, that “ all his arguments smelled of the lamp ;” but could calmly reply to a profligate and insulting rival who cast it in his teeth, — “ yes, indeed, my friend, but your lamp and mine are not conscious to the same labors.” His lamp has thus proved to be one of the great and shining lights of the world. His

* Boeckh's Public Economy of Athens, ch. vii.

orations have thus come down to us, not, perhaps, in all the perfection in which the orations of our own Demosthenes,* edited by our own Cicero, will go down to posterity, — but in a comparatively perfect shape. And it is hardly too much to say, — looking to all the students and scholars and literary men, throughout the world, who now read them, in the original or in translations, that a greater number of minds are moved, instructed, and delighted by their matchless eloquence in any ten years, — I had almost said, in any single year, — at the present day, than during the whole period of his own life. But, I repeat, their immediate influence upon the public opinion of his own day, was limited to the few thousands of freemen, — for women, and children, and slaves were excluded, — to the few thousands of freemen, who could be driven by the Lexiarchs, with their scarlet cords, and under penalty of a fine, within the 12,000 square yards which constituted the area of the Pnyx, — or within the still smaller space which was covered by the Theatre of Bacchus.

Turn with me now to the writers of antiquity, and reflect on the means which they possessed of influencing the public opinion of their own time. Think, for an instant, of an ancient philosopher, historian, politician or poet, sitting down with his stylus or his calamus, and with his tablets of wood or of wax, or his sheets of bark or of vellum, to prepare an essay, or an exposition, or a satire, or a leading article of any sort,

* This allusion could hardly be rendered more distinct to any one who has seen a copy of "The Works of Daniel Webster," as recently edited by Edward Everett.

with the view of producing an immediate impression on a pending question. The very idea seems little better than a joke. How is it to be multiplied? How is it to be circulated? Who is to know any thing about it, within any assignable period, save the author himself, the slaves who may copy it, or the friends to whom he may read it, at the bath or the supper, in the garden or the school? How many persons of their own time, think you, could have been roused by the Panegyric of Isocrates, or been charmed with the history of Herodotus, had they not been recited at the Olympic Games? Where, but for this, would have been the inspiration and emulation which produced the immortal work of Thucydides?

It is hardly too much to say, that the ancients could have composed none of their writings with a view to immediate, general influence as writings. The cumbersome and clumsy character of their writing materials, — which must have rendered the briefest *billet doux* hardly more manageable for slipping slyly into a fair hand, than a modern Family Bible or one of yesterday's Bachelor diplomas, — obviously precluded that ready multiplication and circulation of copies, which such a purpose would have required. They spoke, as we have seen, to the present; — but they must have written to the future, — if, indeed, they were conscious of writing for anybody except (as the admirable Niebuhr would seem to suggest) for the friends to whom they dedicated their books.* And who can cease to wonder that so many noble works of philosophy and history and poetry should have been composed under such discou-

* Niebuhr's Letter to Count de Serre, 9 February, 1823.

raging circumstances? Who can cease to wonder that such splendid diction, such magnificent imagery, such sublime sentiment and glowing narration, should have been reached without the inspiration which modern authors seek and find in the prospect of immediate and wide-spread publication and perusal? How, like a caged eagle, must the soul of Cicero have chafed itself against the bars and barriers by which its utterances were restrained and hindered! How deeply must he have felt the force of such considerations as he has put into the mouth of Africanus, in that exquisite literary *Torso* — the dream of Scipio — to prove that there was “no glory worthy of a wish, to be obtained from the praise of men!”

“Of this little world,” says he, “the inhabited parts are neither numerous nor wide; even the spots where men are to be found are broken by intervening deserts, and the nations are so separated as that nothing can be transmitted from one to another. With the people of the South, by whom the opposite part of the world is possessed, you have no intercourse; and by how small a tract do you communicate with the countries of the North? The Territory which you inhabit is no more than a scanty island, inclosed by a small body of water, to which you give the name of the Great Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. And even in this known and frequented continent, what hope can you entertain that your renown will pass the stream of Ganges or the cliffs of Caucasus? Or, by whom will your name be uttered in the extremities of the North or South, towards the rising or the setting sun?”

O! could the incomparable Roman, with that burn-

ing love of fame which not even his own divine philosophy could extinguish, with that restless craving for applause and notoriety which nothing but his splendid genius and sublime energy could have saved from contempt, — could he, by means of some of the auguries and vaticinations to which he so often appealed, have caught a glimpse of the great discoveries and inventions, by which not only has the old world, as he knew it, been almost immeasurably enlarged, but a new one added to it, and the great centres and capitals of them both brought nearer together than even Rome and Athens were in his own day; — * could he have foreseen, too, that marvellous mystery of Koster, and Faust, and Guttenberg, and Schoeffer, and have known that among the first uses to which it should be applied was the printing of his own Treatises *de Senectute* and *de Officiis*, † and that from that day forward his Orations and Disputations and Essays should be a standard work in every library beneath the sun, the companions and counsellors and consolers of the greatest minds of all ages, — who shall say to what new heights of speculation, to what brighter heaven of invention he might not have mounted! With how much bolder and more confident an emphasis would he not have uttered those

* Cicero, writing to his wife from Athens, says, — “Acastus met me upon my landing, with letters from Rome, having been so expeditious as to perform his journey in one-and-twenty days.”

† Complete printing dates from 1452. There was a German edition of the *De Officiis* in 1466; — and the following is the title of the second book ever printed in England:

“*The booke of Tulle of Old age empynted by me simple persone William Caxton in to Englysshe as the playsir solace & reverence of men growynge in to old age the xij day of August the yere of our lord M.cccc.lxxxj.*”

It was printed within the precincts of Westminster Abbey, where the first printing press in England was erected by Caxton in 1471.

prophetic words — “Ego, vero, omnia quæ gerebam, jam tum in gerendo, spargere me ac disseminare arbitrabar in orbis terræ memoriam sempiternam.” He would not, then, have been found looking so eagerly and so imploringly for his standing with posterity to the poetry of an Archias, or to the history of a Lucceius,* — names, which, as it happens, have owed their own preservation from oblivion to his orations and letters; but he would have felt and realized, as all the world now realizes, that nothing but his own glowing and glorious words were needed to perpetuate the memory of his own noble and heroic life!

And now, Mr. President, if we turn to the writers and speakers of the present age, and to the means which they enjoy of moulding and marshalling the Public Opinion of our own day, the contrast is too obvious and too glaring to require, or even to bear, a word of comment.

It would perhaps be an extravagant remark, were I to say that the last thing which a speaker of modern times cares about, is the number or the character of his audience. It would certainly be a most ungracious remark for one standing in the immediate presence, and appealing to the immediate indulgence, of so distinguished and brilliant an assembly. Great results, I know, are to be produced, and great results are often,

* There are few things more remarkable in literary history than the letter of Cicero to Lucius Lucceius, in which, after acknowledging that he has a strong passion for being celebrated in the writings of Lucceius, and assuring him that he will find the subject not unworthy of his genius and eloquence, he adds, — “I will venture, then, earnestly to entreat you not to confine yourself to the strict laws of history, but to give a greater latitude to your encomiums than, possibly, you may think my actions can claim.”

in fact, produced, in these days as in days of yore, by the influence of the spoken word upon the many or the few who hear it. And much greater results might be accomplished in this way, than any which are witnessed in modern times, if the voice, the manner, the emphasis, the gesture, the whole art of oratory were more carefully studied and cultivated. There are many occasions, moreover, when present, practical, and most important consequences depend upon the success of an immediate oratorical effort. In the Pulpit, that noblest of all rostrums, and at the Bar, the first business of the speaker is to instruct, animate, convince, and carry away captive, if possible, those whom he directly addresses. Now and then, too, there is a popular meeting, or a legislative assembly, at which great measures are to be lost or won, great principles vindicated or overthrown, momentous issues finally made up and decided. Nor have there been wanting among us those able to meet such emergencies.

I deem it to be no disparagement to any one, among the living or the dead, to express the opinion, in this connection, that for immediate power over a deliberative or a popular audience, no man in our Republic, since the Republic has had a name or a being, has ever surpassed the great Statesman of the West, over whom the grave is just closing.* His words will not be referred to in future years, like those of some of his contemporaries, for profound expositions of permanent principles, or for luminous and logical commentaries upon the Constitution or the laws. But for the deep impressiveness and almost irresistible fascination of his

* Henry Clay.

immediate appeals, for prompt, powerful, persuasive, commanding, soul-stirring eloquence upon whatever theme was uppermost in his large, liberal, and patriotic heart, he has had no superior, and hardly an equal, in our country's history. Owing nothing to the schools—nothing to art or education—he has furnished a noble illustration of what may be accomplished by the fire of real genius, by the force of an indomitable will, by the energy of a constant and courageous soul, uttering itself through the medium of a voice, whose trumpet tones will be among the cherished memories of all who ever heard it, and which God never gave to be the organ of any thing less than a master-mind.

But how little, under all ordinary circumstances, is the influence of a modern speaker confined by the accidents of voice or of audience? I have heard, and you, Mr. President,* have far more frequently heard, a past or a present Premier of England, rising at midnight, in a little room hardly more ample or more elegant than many of our common country school-houses or Town Halls, and in the presence of two or three hundred rather drowsy gentlemen, and with not half a dozen hearers besides ourselves in the galleries, diplomatic box and all, pronounce words which not merely determined the policy of a Colossal Empire, but which, before another sun had set, were read, marked, learned and inwardly digested by the whole reading population of the United Kingdom,—and which before the next week had ended, had settled the judgment, and

* Hon. Edward Everett, late American Minister at London, occupied the chair on this occasion, as President of the Association.

fixed the public opinion of the whole continent of Europe, on the subject to which they related.

Nor need we cross the ocean for illustrations of this sort. Where can be found a more striking and impressive example of the pervading and almost miraculous power of the spoken word at the present day, than that which has been witnessed in our own land during the last few months! A wandering exile from the banks of the Danube embarks for America. Fresh from a long and cruel imprisonment, he comes to thank our government and our people for the sympathy and succor to which, in part, he had owed his liberation. A Shakspeare and a Johnson's Dictionary, carefully studied during a previous confinement, have sufficed to furnish him with a better stock of English than is possessed by the great majority of those to whom it is native, and he comes to pour forth in our own tongue the bitter sorrows and the stern resolves which had been so long pent up within his own aching breast. He comes to pray a great and powerful people to aid and avenge his downtrodden country. He lands upon our shores. He puts forth his plea. He speaks. And within one week from his first uttered word, the whole mind and heart and soul of this vast Nation is impressed and agitated. Domestic interests are forgotten. Domestic strifes are hushed. Questions of commerce, and questions of compromise, and questions of candidacy, are postponed. New thoughts take possession of all our minds. New words are in all our mouths. A new mission for our country is seriously mooted. The great name, the greater principles, of

Washington are suffered to be drawn into dispute, and even to be derided as temporary. And, for a moment, the ship of State seems reeling before the blast, and trembling, as for a fatal plunge, upon the verge of an unfathomed and unfathomable vortex, — while the voices of many an agonized patriot are heard exclaiming, as Horace exclaimed to the Roman Republic, —

“ Oh Navis, referent in mare te novi
 Fluctus. O, quid agis? fortiter occupa
 Portum: Nonne vides, ut
 Nudum remigio latus,
 Et malus celeri saucius *Africo*,
 Antennæque gemunt:
 Tu, nisi ventis
 Debes ludibrium, Cave.”

Thanks be to God, those voices have not been unheeded. The sober, second thought has come apace. The danger is over. The cause of popular freedom and National Independence abroad has all our sympathy, and we may not be ready to declare, that under no circumstances shall it receive all our succor. But the case does not now exist, nor is it within the prospect of belief that any such case will soon exist, which can tempt us to peril our own peace, to disregard our own Constitution, to trample under foot the precepts and principles of the Father of his Country, and to involve and implicate the New World in the falling ruins and floating wrecks of the Old World, in the more than doubtful experiment of setting up Republics in Europe for Emperors or would-be Emperors to overthrow. The American masses are not capable of being fanaticized into such madness as this. Kossuth will be remembered by many of us, as he has been received

by us all, with the kindness, the respect, and even the admiration, which a man of real genius, of marvellous eloquence, of indomitable energy, hoping against hope, refusing to despair under circumstances of desperation, struggling against fate and in a holy cause, could never fail to inspire. But the great moral of his visit, the great lesson which he has left behind him, and one never to be forgotten, is that of the power of a single individual, of one earnest and heroic man, by the simple enginery of the tongue and the pen, to shake the solid mind of a whole nation, to agitate the mighty heart of a vast continent, and even to affect and modify the public opinion and the public affairs of the world.

We have heard something, Brethren, of the power of the tongue in other ages. The Apostle James, even in his day, spoke "of a little member which boasteth great things, an unruly evil, which no man can tame, which setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire" — I need not say how. And Shakspeare, in later times, exclaims, with but too much truth,—

"In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt,
But, being seasoned with a gracious voice,
Obscures the show of evil!"

But how little did either of them dream of the vast reach and purchase which the tongue and the voice have acquired in these latter days. Never, never, before, certainly, has anybody realized, as we realize at this hour, the immeasurable power for evil or for good, which modern arts and inventions and institutions have imparted to those great instruments of civilized, educated man,—the spoken and the written

word. It is no longer the mad conceit of some Anarchists Cloots, that a man may be an orator of the human race. It is no longer the ridiculous ranting of some Bombastes Furioso which exclaims, "Attention, the universe!" There are writers and speakers in the Old World and in the New World, to whom the universe of intelligent, civilized man, pays willing, prompt, and eager attention, and of whom it is hardly an exaggeration to say, that "their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." The world, indeed, has become one vast *whispering gallery*, in which all that is said is everywhere heard, and all that is worth hearing is everywhere listened to. Would that we could stop here! But that is not all. That is not all. It is not only the truly great and good whose words and thoughts are communicated to the ears and to the hearts of this world-wide audience. Types and telegraphic wires are no discriminating media, and the press has but too truly fulfilled the paradox of the fountain that pours forth sweet waters and bitter.

It was most strikingly said by Charles Babbage, in his "Ninth Bridgewater Treatise," that "the pulsations of the air, once set in motion by the human voice, cease not to exist with the sounds to which they give rise." "Every atom (says he) impressed with good and with ill, retains at once the motions which philosophers and sages have imparted to it, mixed and combined in ten thousand ways with all that is worthless and base." "The air itself (he exquisitely adds) is one vast Library, on whose pages are forever written all that man has ever said, or even whispered. There,

in their mutable but unerring characters, mixed with the earliest as well as the latest sighs of mortality, stand forever recorded, vows unredeemed, promises unfulfilled, perpetuating in the united movements of each particle, the testimony of man's changeful will."

And however fanciful this may be regarded as a physical theory, it finds but too much confirmation in its application to the moral world. The moral, if not the physical, atmosphere around us, receives, retains, and holds in constant combination all that is uttered and all that is published of the false, the immoral, the licentious, the sceptical, the mystical, the profane, with all that is uttered and all that is published of the true, the pure, the beautiful, the noble, the divine; and all enter alike, according to their proportions and their power, into that great encircling stream of Public Opinion which turns the wheels of all human action. The arts and inventions of modern times, have spread out over the earth one vast *Æolian* lyre, with a responsive note for every articulate opinion by which its myriad strings are swept. They have woven, as it were, one all-pervading nervous system over the whole range of civilized society, along which emotions of every sort vibrate from breast to breast, and leap from heart to heart, to meet, to mingle, to strengthen or dilute, to purify or corrupt, or it may be only to counteract and neutralize each other. They have constructed for all the world a machinery hardly less effective than that ingenious and admirable Fire Alarm which is stretching its mysterious wires, and shooting its magical messages, from spire to spire of yonder neighboring metropolis; and they have

placed its keys peculiarly in the hands of educated men. It is ours to use them for rousing up mankind to heroic acts of rescue and reform, for startling them from the slumbers of ignorance, of sensuality, and of a worse than African bondage, for rallying them in the path of disinterested humanity and Christian warfare, and for awakening and animating them to the extinguishment of the flames of evil passions, inordinate affections, and unruly wills. And it is no less ours, alas, to pervert and abuse them to the purpose of disturbing, disorganizing, and debauching society, by false alarms and factious appeals, by rash speculations and reckless hue-and-cry.

What solemn responsibilities do such considerations imply as resting in these days upon educated men! What fresh and fearful significance do they attach to the declaration of Holy Writ that for every idle word we are to be held to account! What new and momentous motives do they suggest for taking heed what we speak, and what we write! How much better and purer and nobler a Literature might we not have, and how much more just and elevated a Public Sentiment as its result, if every man who is educated to the use of the pen or of the tongue, could be made to feel within himself, as he sits down to his desk or rises to the rostrum, — “The word that I write or that I speak to-day is not for the moment or for myself alone. It is not mine, to minister merely to my own pleasure, to my own profit, to my own fame. It is not mine, to pander to some popular delusion, to fan some popular prejudice, to flatter some popular favorite, or to adorn some plausible falsehood. It is to

produce an influence far beyond that which it immediately proposes. It is to enter, somewhere, in a greater or less degree, into the very springs and issues of human action. It may influence individuals. It may influence masses. It cannot rest indifferent. It cannot return unto me empty. It will mingle with the great current of Public Opinion in some part of its course,—where it winds through some quiet valley, or takes its way beneath some cottage window, if not where it foams and roars around some splendid capitol or some mighty metropolis. This very word which I speak or write to-day, may rouse up a resolute human soul to a newer and better life, or it may turn back some timid and wavering spirit from its truest and best ends, unsettle its faith, unship its anchor, and leave it wrecked for time and for eternity. It may stir the breast of a mighty nation to the maintenance of law or the vindication of liberty; or it may stimulate and infuriate it to the overthrow of the noblest institutions, in a mad pursuit of impracticable philanthropies and reforms. It may elevate and ennoble the hopes and views and aims of mankind, and advance the cause of peace on earth and good-will among men; or it may blow up the smouldering embers of international strife, and kindle a conflagration which shall wrap a world in flames. I am, I must be, responsible for the result. I can no longer pour out immorality, infidelity, profanity, sedition, slander, with impunity. Everywhere there are ears to hear, eyes to read, tongues to repeat, instruments to communicate, hearts and minds to imbibe and comprehend.”

And such a responsibility must be felt, must be

cherished, must be inculcated, must be enforced, wherever a tongue is wagged or a pen is wielded. Responsibility, — not responsibility merely in the sacred forum of law — not responsibility, ever, on the falsely-called field of honor, — but moral and religious responsibility, for what we speak, for what we write, for what we publish, must be solemnly recognized and regarded, if our boasted liberty of speech and of unlicensed printing is not to be a curse to us. The censorship of conscience, in a word, must take the place of the old *imprimaturs* of kings and of cardinals, if a Free Press, the very trunk of our Liberty Tree, is not to find its only fit similitude in that well-remembered Beech tree of the Georgics, —

“ Æsculus, imprimis, quæ quantum vertice ad auras
Ætherias, tantum radice in Tartara tendit.” *

The temptations which interfere with the just observance of the responsibilities of educated men, — in regard to which I proposed to say something also, on this occasion, — are, after all, only those which are common to almost every condition of life.

There is poverty, inducing men to speak and to write for mere pay and reward, and to make all manner of unworthy compliances with the tastes, the follies, and the vices of the hour. And there is avarice, or a passion for wealth, whether to be spent or to be hoarded, by which men are led along in the courses to which, originally, their want, and not their will, may have consented. We may see, at every turn, pens and

* “ High as his topmost boughs to Heaven ascend,
So low his roots to Hell’s dominion tend.”

tongues of the highest order, under influences like these, prostituted to the vilest purposes of hireling subserviency.

These, however, are common and vulgar influences, obvious to everybody, and which it is more than enough to have even named in this presence.

But there are others, less gross in their nature and less revolting to a refined sensibility, which I may not pass over so lightly. I refer to literary vanity, to intellectual pride, to that hankering after notoriety, and that panting for individual celebrity and distinction, which may all, perhaps, be comprehended in the single term, literary ambition.

It has been quite customary to reserve this word *ambition*, certainly in all its reproachful senses, for those who concern themselves with public and political affairs. We hear a great deal about ambitious politicians, and I am willing to admit that there are always enough of them, and more than enough, for the good of society, and that they often devote their pens and their tongues to the most unworthy and worthless purposes.

But there are other varieties of ambitious men, of even a more permanently mischievous influence; men who poison the current of public sentiment at its source, upon subjects more momentous than any mere ups-and-downs of political parties, to gratify their immediate longings for literary celebrity.

The truth is, Mr. President, and it may as well be admitted freely, that literary celebrity and notoriety are not to be attained, in these days, under ordinary circumstances, by any very direct and honest courses. There are a few, always,

“ Whom genius gives to shine,
Thro' every unborn age and undiscovered clime.”

But reading and writing are, in our times, so common, knowledge is so abundant, education is so generally diffused, learning is so widely spread, and even opportunities, in our own country at least, are so equally distributed, that the old distinctions and individualities of scholarship and of authorship have well-nigh disappeared. The air is full of speeches. And the world is full of books, — “outfolioing us out of our houses and homes,” — to use an expressive phrase, which dropped from the lips of the most renowned living warrior of the world, as he was adding more shelves to the library of Apsley House. Almost every thing seems to have been said and written a hundred times over, upon almost every subject, and the field for literary fame to have been reaped and gleaned to the very last sheaf.

Lockhart tells a charming story of Scott and Moore, sallying out one day for a walk through the plantations of Abbotsford, and talking, among other things, about the commonness of the poetic talent in these days. “Hardly a magazine is now published,” said Moore, “that does not contain verses which, some thirty years ago, would have made a reputation.” Scott turned with his look of shrewd humor, as if chuckling over his own success, and said, “Ah, we were in the luck of it to come before these fellows,” but, he added, “we have, like Bobadil, taught them to beat us with our own weapons.” “*In complete novelty*,” says Moore, “he seemed to think lay the only chance for a man ambitious of high literary reputation

in these days." And so have evidently thought many others, both before and since.

Hence the temptation to ambitious writers and speakers to quit the beaten tracks of truth, of reason, and of common sense, and to seek notoriety in extravagant conceits, startling theories, monstrous and mischievous speculations. And not a few of them have reminded us of the story which is somewhere told about Alexander of Macedon, who, baffled in his attempt to overrun and vanquish India, and finding himself unable to achieve any real triumphs on that field, set himself deliberately to work to construct a camp thrice as large as even his own countless armies required, and to prepare immense suits of armor fitted for the limbs of living giants, and huge sarcophagi as if for the remains of dead giants, and to build enormous stables with stalls and mangers capacious enough to accommodate horses thrice as large as even Bucephalus himself, and finally to erect gigantic temples, with inscriptions dedicating them to Ammon as his father; — and all to cover his own real want of success, and to delude those who should follow in his track into a false imagination of his extraordinary power, and his miraculous nature and origin. They deluded nobody, and were really the monuments of his failure, his folly, and his insatiate and insane ambition.

Very much of this sort was Jean Jacques Rousseau's scheme for gratifying his literary ambition. Burke tells us that Hume told him, "that he had from Rousseau himself the secret of his principles of composition. That acute, though eccentric observer, (says he,) had perceived that to strike and interest the public, the

marvellous must be produced ; that the marvellous of heathen mythology had long since lost its effect ; that giants, magicians, fairies, and heroes of romance, which succeeded, had exhausted the portion of credulity which belonged to their age ; that now nothing was left to a writer but that species of the marvellous which might still be produced, and with as great an effect as ever, though in another way ; — that is the marvellous in life, in manners, in characters, and in extraordinary situations, giving rise to new and unlooked for strokes in politics and morals.” “I believe,” added Burke, speaking of some of the writers of France in 1790, “that were Rousseau alive, and in one of his lucid intervals, he would be shocked at the practical frenzy of his scholars, who, in their very paradoxes are servile imitators ; and even in their incredulity, discover an implicit faith.” *

Such were the avowed principles upon which the essays on the Inequalities of Human Condition, the Social Compact, the New Eloise, and the rest, were deliberately composed. And most effectually did they answer the end for which they were designed. They gave rise, in very truth, to new and unlooked for strokes in politics and in morals, and that, not merely on the written page, but in the practical drama of life. The tragic horrors of the French Revolution, its shocking massacres, its revolting licentiousness, its bare-faced infidelity and atheism, found some of their strongest impulses and incentives in these writings of Rousseau. And thus, according to his own account, this bold, bad man, was seen deliberately sapping and

* Burke's Works, Little and Brown, 1839, vol. iii. p. 200.

mining the very foundations of civil and political society, in order to gratify his personal vanity, by striking and interesting the public in the production of the marvellous!

How well did the great poet of Ireland speak of him, — when visiting one of the scenes of his disgusting profligacy, as one, —

“ Who more than all that e’er have glowed
With fancy’s flame (and it was *his*
In fullest warmth and radiance) showed
What an impostor Genius is ; —

“ How like a gem its light may smile
O’er the dark spot by mortals trod,
Itself as mean a worm the while
As crawls at midnight o’er the sod ;

“ What gentle words and thoughts may fall
From its false lip, what zeal to bless,
While home, friends, kindred, country, all,
Lie waste beneath its selfishness.” *

I fear, Brethren, that this principle of composition is not yet abandoned. I fear that we owe more than one work of later days to the same theory. I fancy, that more than one educated literary man, since Rousseau’s time, has sat down deliberately to calculate, without regard to the consequences to his country or to mankind, how he should go to work to strike and interest the public. I fancy that I hear more than one such person, as he burns with an unregulated and an unholy passion for mere fame, asking himself, — not what shall I say, or what shall I write, to benefit humanity, to enlighten and instruct my fellow men, and to repay to the future, or to the present, some of

the advantages which I have received from the past,—but what shall I speak or write to render myself an object of attention, distinction, and notoriety.

“Tentanda via est, quâ me quoque possim
Tollere humo, victorque virum volitare per ora, —”

Or, as old father Cowley has translated it, —

“What shall I do to be forever known,
And make the age to come my own?”

And I think I hear more than one such person,—to whom it has not been given to achieve greatness by any direct and manly means, and who despairs of turning any thing common, any thing good, any thing true, or just, or useful, to such an account,—I think I hear more than one such person answering in the precise vein of Jean Jacques;—I must attempt something strange and marvellous, something original and startling, something that may give rise to unlooked-for strokes in politics or in morals;—I must leap to the antipodes of all received opinions in philosophy, in science, or in religion;—I must pander to the vicious tastes and depraved appetites of the young and thoughtless;—I must speculate on, and make capital out of, the noble sentiments and sympathies and philanthropies of the ardent and generous;—I must arraign the most solemn principles and the most sacred institutions;—I must defy the authority of Government, or, it may be, of God;—I must deride all peculiar regard for one’s native land, in swelling pretensions of love for universal brotherhood, and show myself

“A steady patriot of the world alone,
The friend of every country but my own.”

Or, it may be, that such an ambition may content itself with a more innocent mode of accomplishing its end, by affecting mere novelties of style, or mere nebulosities of thought. This, too, is an old trick of authorship, though it seems to have been almost forgotten into newness. I do not know whether even you, Mr. President, who remember every thing, are aware how entirely Le Sage, almost a century and a half ago, anticipated and foreshadowed this whole modern school of nebulous thought and new-fangled phraseology. Let me recall to you, for an instant, the encounter of his hero with his old friend Fabricius, the son of Barber Nunnez, who, having been "seized with a rage for rhyme," and having suddenly conceived the idea "that he was born to eternize his name by works of Genius," turned author, commenced wit, and "soon wrote both in prose and in verse, and was equally good at every thing." This person, having been called on by Gil Blas for a taste of his quality, rehearsed first a sample of his sonnets. "If this sonnet, said he, is not intelligible, so much the better. The natural and simple won't do for sonnets, odes, and other works that require the sublime. The sole merit of these is in their obscurity; and it is sufficient if the poet himself thinks he understands them." And then, having been induced to recite a specimen of his prose, which Gil Blas ventured to criticize, also, as wanting in perspicuity — "Poor ignoramus, cried Fabricius, thou dost not know then, that every prosaic writer who now aspires at the reputation of a delicate pen, affects that singularity of style, and those odd expressions, which shock thee so much. There are of us five or six bold

innovators, who have undertaken to make a thorough change in the language, and we will accomplish it (please God) in spite of Lope De Vega, Cervantes, and all the fine geniuses who cavil at our new modes of speech. We are seconded by a number of partisans of distinction, and have even some theologicians in our Cabal." *

So true is it, Brethren, that all these labored affectations of modern style are without even the merit of originality, and are only, after all, a kind of *palimpsest* of literary folly, — a revival of expedients for making a great show upon a small capital, which have long ago been exposed and exploded.

These antics of literary ambition are so comparatively harmless, however, when they begin and end in mere peculiarities of style or obscurities of sense, that one is hardly disposed to complain of them. Nay, there is now and then one, abroad or at home, who plays his fantastic pranks, with words or with thoughts, in a manner at once so captivating and so innocent, — and with whom an eccentric mannerism is seen to be so thin and transparent a veneering upon a sound, substantial, *lignum vitæ* stock, — that we can hardly withhold our admiration and applause. Yet truth, and reason, and sound wisdom, have such a close and natural affinity to simplicity and perspicuity, that it is difficult to avoid distrusting any one who approaches us in the mask of affected unintelligibleness or oddity. And we cannot forget, that the same clouds which, at one moment, exhibit only the exquisite colors of the rainbow or the gorgeous hues of sunset, may, at the

* Gil Blas, Book VII. ch. 13.

next, bear along in their fleecy folds the deadly bolt or the destructive blast. Mere grotesquenesses of diction or of conception may excite our mirth ; but when applied to serious and solemn themes, they merit the sternest rebuke.

When Professor Lorenz Oken, of Zurich, for example, (to come no nearer home,) tells us that "animals are men who never imagine ;—that they are single accounts ;—that man is the whole of mathematics ; and that self-consciousness is a living ellipse," — we can smile. And we may hardly restrain a less equivocal and less dignified emotion than a smile, when he rises to a grander flight, and exclaims, — "Gazing upon a snail, one believes that he finds the prophesying goddess sitting upon her tripod. What majesty is in a creeping snail, what reflection, what earnestness, what timidity, and yet, at the same time, what firm confidence ! Surely, a snail is an exalted symbol of mind slumbering deeply within itself." *

But when he invades the region of sacred things, when he intrudes upon the domain of Faith, when he rashly rends the vail and presumes to enter within the Holy of Holies, when he dares to say that "the Eternal is the nothing of nature, — that there exists nothing but nothing, nothing but the Eternal, — that for God to become real he must appear under the form of a sphere, — that God manifesting is an infinite sphere, — that God is a rotating globe, — and, finally, that the world is God rotating," — then, indeed, we begin to realize, that there may be worse things than

* I am indebted to President Hitchcock's admirable Lectures on "The Religion of Geology" for all I know of Professor Lorenz Oken and his writings.

unintelligibleness in this new-fangled nonsense, — that the cap and bells is quite too respectable a crown for such composers, — and that nothing but the voluntary assumption of the strait-jacket, or the certainty that they are in a condition to need it, should screen them from the scorn and reprobation of intelligent, Christian men.

Let me add that this learned Professor of natural science, who, — I rejoice to believe, forms an exception to the general mass of European *savans* at the present day, or, certainly an exception to the Lyells and Bucklands, the Whewells and Herschells, the Owens and Murchisons and Hugh Millers of Old England, and whose writings, let me add, furnish so striking a contrast to the beautiful strain of religious faith and reverence which eminently characterizes the discourses and essays of the distinguished Professors from his own more immediate region who adorn this University by their relation to it,* — is one of the last persons who has any excuse for the publication of such blasphemous speculations. There are fields enough for the wildest and most extravagant theorizings, within his own appropriate domain, without overleaping the barriers which separate things human and Divine. Indeed, I have often thought that modern science had afforded a most opportune and providential safety-valve for the intellectual curiosity and ambition of man, at a moment when the progress of education, invention, and liberty, had roused and stimulated them to a pitch of such unprecedented eagerness and ardor. Astronomy, Chemistry, and more than all, Geology, with their inci-

* Professors Agassiz and Guyot.

dental branches of study, have opened an inexhaustible field for investigation and speculation. Here, by the aid of modern instruments and modern modes of analysis, the most ardent and earnest spirits may find ample room and verge enough for their insatiate activity and audacious enterprise, and may pursue their course not only without the slightest danger of doing mischief to others, but with the certainty of promoting the great end of scientific truth.

Let them lift their vast reflectors or refractors to the skies, and detect new planets in their hiding-places. Let them waylay the fugitive comets in their flight, and compel them to disclose the precise period of their orbits, and to give bonds for their punctual return. Let them drag out reluctant satellites from "their habitual concealments." Let them resolve the unresolvable nebulae of Orion or Andromeda. They need not fear. The sky will not fall, nor a single star be shaken from its sphere.

Let them perfect and elaborate their marvellous processes for making the light and the lightning their ministers, for putting "a pencil of rays" into the hand of art, and providing tongues of fire for the communication of intelligence. Let them foretell the path of the whirlwind and calculate the orbit of the storm. Let them hang out their gigantic pendulums, and make the earth do the work of describing and measuring her own motions. Let them annihilate human pain, and literally "charm ache with air, and agony with ether." The blessing of God will attend all their toils, and the gratitude of man will await all their triumphs.

Let them dig down into the bowels of the earth.

Let them rive asunder the massive rocks, and unfold the history of creation as it li s written on the pages of their piled up strata. Let them gather up the fossil fragments of a lost Fauna, reproducing the ancient forms which inhabited the land or the seas, bringing them together, bone to his bone, till Leviathan and Behemoth stand before us in bodily presence and in their full proportions, and we almost tremble lest these dry bones should live again! Let them put nature to the rack, and torture her, in all her forms, to the betrayal of her inmost secrets and confidences. They need not forbear. The foundations of the round world have been laid so strong that they cannot be moved.

But let them not think by searching to find out God. Let them not dream of understanding the Almighty to perfection. Let them not dare to apply their tests and solvents, their modes of analysis or their terms of definition, to the secrets of the spiritual kingdom. Let them spare the foundations of faith. Let them be satisfied with what is revealed of the mysteries of the Divine Nature. Let them not break through the bounds to gaze after the Invisible, — lest the day come when they shall be ready to cry to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us!

Brethren, I have a deep feeling that one of the great wants of our time is a stronger sense of responsibility among educated and literary men for the word spoken and the word written. There needs more of that spirit with which Johnson concluded his Rambler, when he said, "I shall never envy the honors which wit and learning obtain in any other cause, if I can be remembered among the writers, who have given ardor to

virtue and confidence to truth." There needs more of that spirit to which Walter Scott, — who, as we have seen, was not unaware of the importance of complete novelty for literary success, — gave expression, when he said to a friend a few years before his death, — "I am drawing near to the close of my career. I am fast shuffling off the stage. I have been, perhaps, the most voluminous author of the day; and it is a comfort for me to think, that I have tried to unsettle no man's faith, to corrupt no man's principle, and that I have written nothing which, on my death-bed, I should wish blotted." There needs more of that spirit to which Alexander Pope gave brilliant and beautiful utterance, in the summing up of his survey of the Temple of Fame: —

"Nor fame I slight, nor for her favors call,
 She comes unlooked for, if she comes at all.
 But if the purchase costs so dear a price,
 As soothing folly, or exalting vice;
 Oh, if the Muse must flatter lawless sway,
 And follow still where fortune leads the way;
 Or if no basis bear my rising name,
 But the fall'n ruins of another's fame; —
 Then teach me, Heaven! to scorn the guilty bays,
 Drive from my breast that wretched lust of praise;
 Unblemish'd let me live, or die unknown;
 Oh, grant an honest fame, or grant me none!"

Or better still might it be, if we could rise with Milton, to a strain of higher mood, and realize that

"Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
 Nor in the glistening foil
 Set off to the world, nor in broad rumor lies;
 But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
 And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
 As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
 Of so much fame in Heaven expect thy meed."

And more especially are such deeper views of responsibility, and such loftier ideas of a true and honest fame, needed among the speakers and writers of our own land. When Rome had risen to the highest pitch of grandeur and renown, her sagacious Satirist saw the cause of her approaching decline and fall in the growth of a vicious, corrupting, and enervating luxury.

“ Sævior armis
Luxuria incubuit, victumque ulciscitur orbem.”

This was an enemy which would be peculiarly fatal to a great Military Empire, which had built itself up by conquest, and which could only rely upon the manhood, the courage, the physical energy and endurance of its people, to repel the invasions of Gauls or of Goths. But it is ours to live in a great MORAL EMPIRE; — not, indeed, without solemn forms of Law, not without revered tribunals of Justice, not without organized systems of Government, but all resting on the original consent of the governed, all appealing to the intelligence and morality of the people for their continued support and maintenance, all relying on the more than atmospheric pressure of an enlightened public opinion for their stability and authority. And if some Juvenal were here to-day to lash the follies and portray the perils of our own land, I doubt if he could point out a more serious and salient source of danger, — I do not say danger of its decline and fall, for we admit no such ideas into our minds, no such words into our vocabulary, — but of its social deterioration, its internal distraction, its failure to fulfil and act out the whole great *rôle* which has been assigned

to it, — than the growing license and licentiousness of speech and of the press.

Never before were there so many opportunities for the employment of tongues and of types, and never before were there so many temptations to the abuse of them. Consider what innumerable fields for the spoken word the institutions of our Country have thrown open. Not to speak of that more conspicuous arena of political debate, of which you and I, sir, should hardly care to say all that we think or to tell all that we know, — consider the multitudinous Legislative Assemblies, and Municipal Councils, and Caucuses, and Stumps, and Lyceums, and Associations, and Anniversaries, and Courts of Law, and Temples of Religion, from which words of some sort are continually flowing into that great torrent of talk, which is always sounding in our ears like the rush of mighty waters. Every where there are itching ears with more than an Athenian eagerness for some new thing, and with a never-tiring willingness to reward facility and felicity of speech with the highest honors of the day. What Lord Sheffield said, with doubtful justice, perhaps, of political office in Great Britain in 1785, we may say almost without qualification of all offices and honors in our own land, at the present hour. “In this Country,” said he, “no other proof is required of fitness for every office, than *Oratory*; — that talent supplies the place of all knowledge, experience, and judgment.”

And then, the Press of America, — the periodical press, the pamphlet press, the light literature press, and above all, the Newspaper press of America, — that tremendous enginery which throws a fresh broad-

side at morning and evening and noonday beneath almost every roof in the Republic, and whose competitions so often betray it into fatal compliances with the prejudices, the passions, and even the profligacies of its supporters; — who can estimate the influence of such an enginery upon our social and moral condition? Who can calculate the pernicious effect upon the community of a single, corrupt, licentious Newspaper, coining slanders like a mint, changing phases like the moon, “with three hundred and sixty-five opinions in a year,” upon every subject which it treats, spicing its daily and its nightly potions with every variety of obscene and sensual stimulant, controlled by no sense of responsibility, finding its easy way to the knowledge and perusal of the young, the ignorant, and the inexperienced, and ministering and pandering to their diseased tastes and depraved appetites! And who can calculate, on the other hand, the influence which might be produced, — nay, let me say, which is produced, — for I have in my mind, I thank Heaven, more than one example — by such an engine in the hands of upright, intelligent, independent, and conscientious men, — espousing and advocating neither ultraisms nor citraisms, neither a wild fanaticism nor a bigoted conservatism, with the fear of God before their eyes, with the love of truth in their hearts, and by whom the advancement of knowledge, of morality, of virtue, of right, and of righteousness, is not held subordinate to the popularity of the hour, or to the state of the subscription list.

The present accomplished and eloquent Prime Minister of England, who has been personally known

and esteemed by so many of us in this country as well as in his own,* has recently declared, somewhat emphatically, on the floor of Parliament, that "as in these days the English Press aspires to share the influence of statesmen, so also it must share the responsibilities of statesmen." It would be more true in this country, I fear, to speak of statesmen aspiring to share the influence of the press. But, however it may be as to the point of relative aspiration, there can be little question as to that of comparative responsibility. Certainly, if responsibility is to be measured by power, the responsibility of the press is greater than that of any statesman under the sun, however exalted he may be. Who has forgotten that splendid exclamation of another great English Minister and Orator, in 1810, when he challenged and defied all the authorities of the realm to contend against the power of the press? "Give them," said he "a corrupt House of Lords; give them a venal House of Commons; give them a tyrannical Prince; give them a truckling Court; and let me but have an unfettered press;—I will defy them to encroach a hair's breadth upon the liberties of England."† Yes, an unfettered press is a match, and an overmatch, for almost any thing human. Neither tyranny nor freedom can stand against it. Neither corruption nor virtue can survive its systematic and persevering assaults. It may be rendered all but omnipotent for evil; it may be rendered all but omnipotent for good; according to the ends to which it is

* The Earl of Derby visited the United States many years ago as Mr. Stanley.

† Sheridan.

directed, and the influences by which it is controlled. And the only reliable, earthly influence to which we can look for safety, is a sense of responsibility, moral and religious responsibility, on the part of its controllers.

Brethren, tremendous powers are in all our hands, tremendous responsibilities are on all our shoulders. The educated men of America, to whom peculiarly the use of the tongue and of the pen have been imparted, must look to it seasonably that they are not false or faithless to the great obligations which their advantages and opportunities have imposed upon them. It is upon them, preëminently, that the responsibility rests for whatever abuses of speech or of the press may endanger our political or our moral condition. It is for them to determine (under God) whether the extraordinary gift of tongues which characterizes our time and country, shall be attended with something of the blessing of a Pentecost, or with more than the curse of a Babel! It is for them to cultivate and to exhibit a greater caution as to what they speak and what they print. It is for them to restrain that yearning after notoriety which leads to so much of vicious exaggeration and extravagance. It is for them to resist the temptations of poverty as well as of ambition, and to learn how to spurn the bribe which would beguile them to the advocacy or the utterance of what is false or foul. It is for them, if need be, to withstand even the temptations of their own genius, and to let even the lyre of a Mozart or the muse of a Byron lie mute forever, rather than renew the spectacle of the divinest melodies and most exquisite cantos prosti-

tuted to the loathsome lecheries of a Don Juan. It is for them to do more than this. It is for them not merely to put the curb of conscience upon their own tongues and pens, but to be vigilant and active in counteracting and disinfecting the corrupting and polluted streams which may issue from the pens and tongues of others. The scholars and educated men of America must feel and realize that they have a new mission assigned to them, growing out of the nature of our institutions, and essential, vitally essential, to their maintenance, — not that, mainly or primarily, of building up a permanent American Literature, but that of creating and keeping alive a sound, healthy, Public Opinion upon all subjects of morality, religion, philosophy, and politics.

Honor to those graduates of our own and other Universities, who have already laid the foundations of our literary renown by works of History, Poetry, Biography, and Fiction, which have extorted a tribute of admiration from the old world hardly inferior to the glow of pride which they have kindled in the new. But this is the province of the few. A more practical, and a more practicable service remains for the many. It is for them to meet the common and daily exigencies of our social and political condition. They must not reserve themselves only for the more stately occasions or the more critical emergencies of society. They must not discard even such commonplace things as truth, duty, virtue, patriotism, piety, from the list of subjects, which it may become even the most learned, the most accomplished, the most ambitious of them to treat. They must condescend to deal with common thoughts,

with common words, with common topics ; — or rather, they must learn to consider nothing as common or unclean which may contribute to the welfare of man, the safety of the republic, or the glory of God. It is theirs, by their efforts in the pulpit or at the bar, in the lecture room or the legislative hall, at the meetings of select societies, or at the grander gatherings of popular masses, in the columns of daily papers, in the pages of periodical reviews or magazines, or through the scattered leaves of the occasional tract or pamphlet, to keep a strong, steady current of sound, rational, enlightened sentiment always in circulation through the community. Let them remember that false doctrines will not wait to be corrected by ponderous folios or cumbrous quartos. The thin pamphlet, the meagre tract, the occasional address, the weekly sermon, the daily leader, — these are the great instruments of shaping and moulding the destinies of our country. In them, the scholarship of the country must manifest itself. In them, the patriotism of the country must exhibit itself. In them, the morality and religion of the country must assert itself. “The word in season,” — that word of which Solomon understood the beauty and the value, when he likened it to apples of gold in pictures of silver, — it is that which is to arrest error, rebuke falsehood, confirm faith, kindle patriotism, commend morality and religion, purify public opinion, and preserve the State.

Here, then, Brethren, where we first acquired so much of any faculty which we may possess for moving and influencing the minds of others, let us realize our responsibility for its use. Here let us resolve, that it

shall be by no spoken or written word of ours, that the public morality shall be shaken, the public faith unsettled, the public order endangered. Here let us resolve, that if wild and extravagant theories,—if the conceits and crudities of an unchastened speculation,—if a spirit of insubordination to divine or human authority,—if a rebellion of the intellect against every thing worthy of being the object of faith, strangely contrasted with the weakest and most credulous entertainment of the most worthless superstitious impostures,—if a morbid sentimentalism, or a disorganizing socialism, or a disloyal sectionalism, or an irreverent and impious rationalism,—are to be among the dangers of our age and country, they shall find neither apostles nor apologists among us. Here, at these altars, let us consecrate our pens and our tongues, and all our parts and powers, as educated men, to our Country, our God, and Truth. Then, then, indeed,—so far, at least, as we are concerned,—shall that mighty current of Public Opinion, by which the course of human events, individual, social, and national, is forever to be so greatly directed and controlled, and from whose influence we cannot separate ourselves if we would,—be no longer in danger of becoming, as it advances and widens and deepens, a rushing and a raging flood, overflowing its banks, sweeping away landmarks, undermining the fabric of free government, and prostrating the tribunals of justice and the temples of God,—nor yet shall it be in danger of losing itself, at any time, in a dull, profitless, pestilential stagnation,—but peaceful, healthful, progressive, fertilizing, it shall realize the vision of the Holy Waters

of Ezekiel, issuing from beneath the threshold of the sanctuary. It may rise to the ancles, it may rise to the knees, it may rise to the loins, it may rise to be a river, — “waters to swim in, a river that cannot be passed over ;” — but upon its banks shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade ; “and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine,” and “every thing shall live whither the River cometh !”

And now again, Mr. President and Brethren, I turn once more, for a moment, and in conclusion, to the occasion on which we are assembled.

We have organized ourselves into an Association for the purpose of promoting the prosperity and welfare of this ancient and venerated Institution. We have come together at the prompting of a true filial piety, to concert measures for advancing the interests, and elevating the character, and extending the just renown of a beloved and cherished parent. Ten years have already elapsed since our First Anniversary Celebration. Our first President, the accomplished, inflexible and irreproachable Statesman — our first Orator, the learned, profound and incomparable jurist — Adams and Story — are among us no more ; and those noble and congenial spirits, Pickering and Saltonstall, who were associated with them on our first Board of Directors, have gone with them to their reward. I know not how many others of those who were earliest and most active in our ranks are no longer numbered among the living. We may not shut our ears to the voice which thus calls upon those of us who remain, to redeem the time by the adoption of some more sub-

stantial and effective measures than have yet been attempted, for promoting the great ends of our Association.

We can do much, — much by material aid, much by moral effort. And I rejoice to believe that the occasion will not pass away without the final arrangement of a plan, through which the good wishes and the good works of us all may find a worthy and noble consummation.*

But I cannot forget that there are others, not yet included in our ranks, upon whom the reputation of the College rests far more even than upon ourselves. No efforts to advance the welfare of such an institution from without, can ever supply the place of those which must proceed from within. It is not munificent endowments, — it is not splendid establishments, — it is not sumptuous libraries, — it is not accomplished and laborious professors, — it is not cheap tuition or free scholarships, — important and invaluable as they all are, — which can make this University all that it might be — all that we desire to see it.

The just reputation and renown of such an institution depend first and foremost upon the conduct and character of those who are successively the subjects of its care. Let there be seen here from year to year a high moral tone among the immediate students, a lofty standard of conduct as well as of scholarship, — a spirit of devotion to duty, of fidelity to themselves, and of allegiance to the government of the College, — and the prosperity of Harvard will be secure.

It is you, Young Gentlemen of the Classes, who hold the destinies of the College in your hands, bound up

* See note at the end.

in the same bundle of life with your own. And we are here to ask you, to implore you, to deal considerately, kindly, justly, with them both. We have travelled the road before you; we know all its temptations and trials; and we are here this day to bear witness to you, as you will bear witness in our place hereafter, to those who shall succeed you, that there is not one of us, from the most successful to the most unfortunate of us all, — from him who, having received ten talents, can this day produce other ten to the glory of God and his Alma Mater, to him who comes with his single talent, unimproved and hid in a napkin, — that there is not one among us all, who has not wished again and again, a thousand times, who does not still wish, that he had made better use of the opportunities and advantages which you now enjoy. We are here to tell you, that there is not a recitation we ever neglected, nor a prayer we ever missed, nor an act of insubordination we ever committed, nor an unauthorized indulgence, nor an unworthy excess, of which we were ever guilty, which we do not remember with regret. We feel that nothing which we can do now, either for the College or for ourselves, can atone for what we left undone then. We feel that upon you, as Undergraduates, and not upon us, as Alumni, the hopes, the character, the honor of our common mother primarily and principally depend. We appeal to you all, as those whom we trust soon to welcome within our own ranks, not to trifle with so great a trust, not to neglect so great a responsibility. To each one of you we appeal, in a spirit of more than brotherly regard and affection, — *Reverere, reverere de te tantam expectationem!*

NOTE TO PAGE 56.

THE following "PLAN FOR SCHOLARSHIPS," was proposed and adopted on this occasion :

THE ALUMNI OF HARVARD COLLEGE, assembled around the festive board of Alma Mater, in July, 1852, desirous of performing some act, which shall at once redound to the good of the College, and cement more closely the bonds, which unite classmates with each other, and classes with the University, and in the hope that their act may have the additional recommendation of extending the benefits of Harvard College instructions to increased numbers of meritorious youth of our country, hereby assent to and adopt the following plan for establishing a system of Scholarships in the College, viz. :—

1. A Scholarship shall be established by the payment of the sum of two thousand dollars to the Treasurer of Harvard College.

2. Every Class, which has one or more living members, shall have a right to establish one or more Scholarships.

3. No appropriation shall be made of the income of any Scholarship Fund unless the capital sum invested shall be, or shall have become by accumulation, at least two thousand dollars.

4. Any Class may pay any portion of a Scholarship Fund, at any time, to the Treasurer of the College in sums of not less than one hundred dollars at any one time.

5. The Treasurer of the College shall be requested to keep a separate account with each Scholarship, and to designate it by the year of the graduation of the Class, which shall have contributed the fund to endow such Scholarship.

6. Whenever a Class shall have made provision for a Scholarship, by the contribution of \$2,000, or when the contribution shall have reached that sum by accumulation, it shall be competent for such Class, annually, to nominate any meritorious young man, then a member of College, or about entering, as a suitable person to receive the income of the Scholarship of such Class, whether a descendant of a member of the Class or otherwise.

7. The Corporation, on consultation with the Faculty, may refuse to confirm any appointment made by a Class, without assigning reasons, and they may appropriate the income of the Scholarship of such Class for the remainder of the year to any meritorious student.

8. In selecting candidates to receive the benefits of Scholarships, neither the Class, the Corporation, nor the Faculty shall receive applica-

tion, from any individual, to be placed upon the foundation of a Scholarship, except in writing.

9. The income arising from any Scholarship not appropriated in any year, shall be invested as the capital for a new Scholarship, and any Scholarships so created shall, when completed, be termed University Scholarships, to be under the sole control of the Corporation.

10. No Class shall be allowed to make a nomination of any person to be the recipient of the income of a Scholarship at any other time than during Commencement-week ; and in case no nomination shall be made during the said week, the Corporation, on consultation with the Faculty, may appoint some one to be the recipient for that year, if they see fit so to do.

NATHANIEL B. SHURTLEFF, *Secretary.*

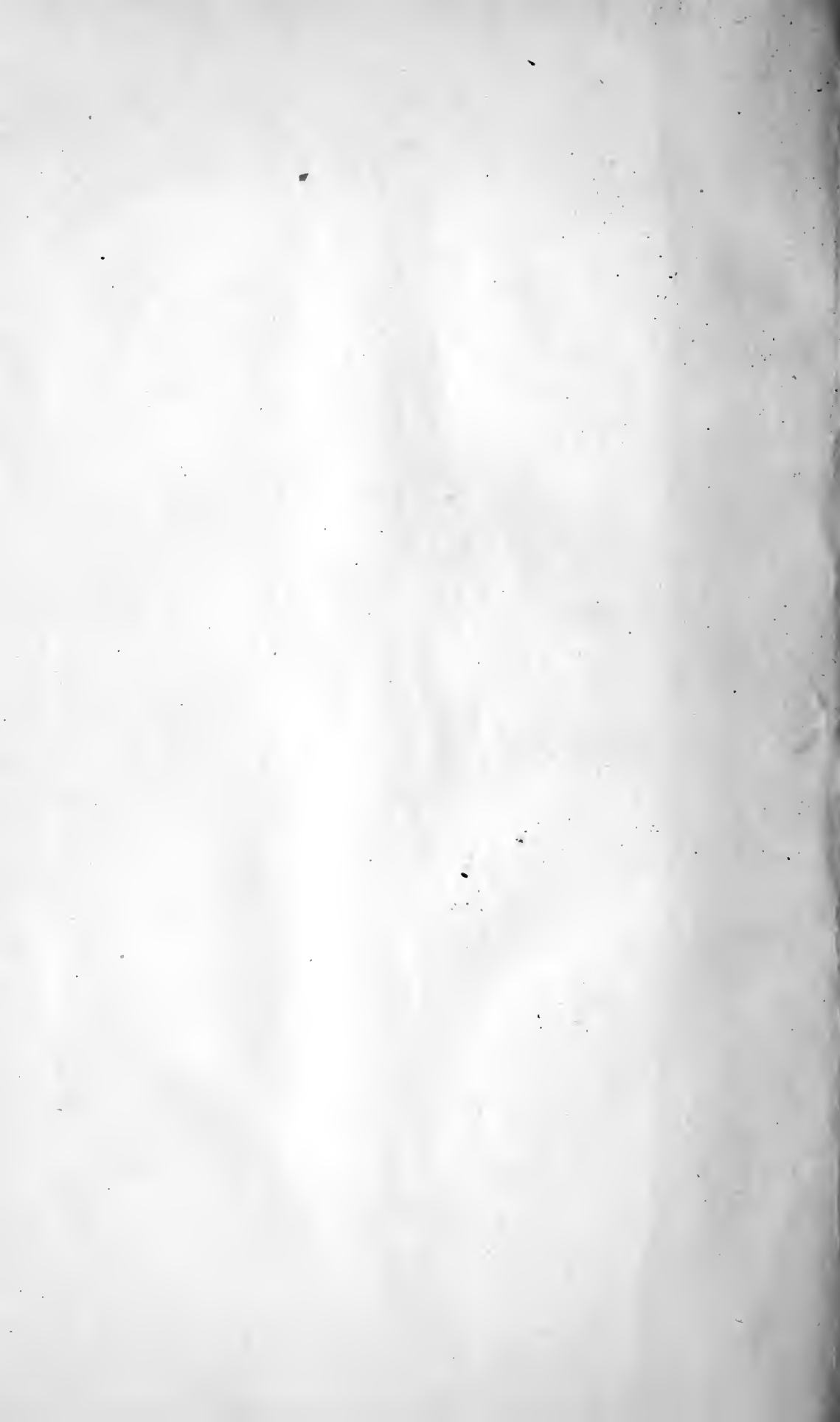
Boston, July 23, 1852.













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